

changes as a consequence of drainage, cattle grazing or burning. In the metropolitan area of Curitiba, where all the previously known records of the species in Paraná are concentrated, the surviving natural habitats are being rapidly destroyed, mainly as a consequence of the extraction of sand from the subsoil. The habitat loss in this area may become almost complete when two dams and a road, which are planned, have been built, thus extirpating the Sickie-winged Nightjar locally.

We thank Júlio de Moura Leite and Dante M. Teixeira for critically reading the present text, and the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) for the financial help. We would also like to acknowledge the help of Jorge B. Nacinovic (MN) in the revision of this manuscript.

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29 June 1995

THE NEST OF BLACKISH-HEADED SPINETAIL *SYNALLAXIS TITHYS*

On 8–9 January 1995 at Tambo Negro (4°24'S, 79°51'W) in Prov. Loja, Ecuador, I found three nests of *Synallaxis tithys*, a poorly known spinetail endemic to southwestern Ecuador and adjacent northwestern Peru. These appear to be the first records of nesting in this species.

The first nest was found on 8 January in a vine tangle in the understorey of *Ceiba trichistandra*-dominated deciduous forest about 5 m above a dry streambed. My attention was first attracted to the nest by the trilled calls of an adult bird, which brought a 15 cm twig to the nest. The nest was placed between the main trunk of the tree and a low bough placed at 60° to it. The body of the nest was about 30 cm above the base of the fork and was wholly supported by the vines, and appeared to be the standard ball of sticks typical of *Synallaxis* spinetails

(Ridgely & Tudor 1994; *The Birds of South America*, vol. 2); it was about 40 cm wide at its widest point and about 30 cm deep. On 9 January, once again attracted by the calling of the birds, I found two more nests; they were smaller and more concealed, both about 3 m above either the streambed or the forest floor.

During my visit the dry season was coming to an end and heavy rain had fallen in the area just before my arrival. That *S. tithys* breeds at this time is to be expected, as recent studies have shown that many species breed in the rainy season in southwestern Ecuador (Best *et al.* 1993, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 113: 234–255). The nest sites were close to one another and the species was reasonably common in the area; this may have been due to concentration at the site caused by loss of habitat in the surrounding area.

I would like to thank Brinley Best for his encouragement and his comments on the first draft of this note.

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3 July 1995

BOOKS RECEIVED

Williams, T. D. 1995. *The Penguins*. Pp. xiv+295, 8 colour plates, text-figures, maps and sonagrams. ISBN 0-19-854667-X. Oxford University Press. £35. 25 × 20 cm.

The second in the series of bird family monographs, organised on the same plan as that noticed in the previous issue of the *Bulletin*, also deals with a family of moderate size (17 species in 6 genera). There is, as would be expected, far more statistical data in the species accounts, summarising a vast amount of research over the last 35 years. The chapter on conservation is refreshingly outspoken in putting man in the dock for all the most serious threats facing penguins, as also most other forms of life. The colour plates by J. N. Davies, showing adults, immatures and chicks of all the species, are excellent. For those needing a less detailed account of the family, OUP have published a much briefer summary in paperback, *Penguins of the World*, by Pauline Reilly (1994), using the colour plates and other illustrations from volume 1 of the *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*.

Holloway, S. 1996. *The Historical Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Pp. vii+476, maps, text-figures and tables. ISBN 0-85661-094-1. T. & A. D. Poyser. £25. 26 × 19 cm.

The last quarter of the 19th century was a period of rapid change, both in the environment and in the human attitude to birds. It was the time when "the persecution of birds and mammals was at its most thoughtless", but also the time when, among a small but growing section of society, active protection was being promoted. It followed a period, beginning about 1840, when the number of local publications on birds began to increase rapidly, culminating in the county avifaunas that began with Harting's *Birds of Middlesex* in 1866. By the early 20th century most of the English and Welsh counties had their known avifaunas published. This was therefore a good period to choose for a historical survey that might be compared in some detail with the later BTO 1968–72 breeding bird atlas.

The author has drawn on all available published sources. In an introductory chapter he deals with the history of the Watsonian vice-county system of England and Wales, the Faunal Districts of Scotland, and the late 19th century counties of Ireland, which are